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## **DEFENDING WINNER FINNEGANS WAKE JOINED BY GI WINNERS BIG BLUE KITTEN, OBVIOUSLY (IRE) AMONG NOMINEES FOR 29<sup>th</sup> WOODFORD RESERVE TURF CLASSIC**

**LOUISVILLE, Ky. (Wednesday, March 2, 2016)** – Donegal Racing and Rockingham Ranch's defending winner **Finnegans Wake** heads a strong roster of accomplished turf veterans and exciting rising grass stars made eligible during the early phase of nominations to the 29<sup>th</sup> running of the \$500,000 **Woodford Reserve Turf Classic** (Grade I), one of America's top events for older grass stars and a racing highlight of a stellar racing program of seven graded stakes events headed by the \$2 million Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands (GI) at Churchill Downs Racetrack on Saturday, May 7.

The **Peter Miller**-trained 7-year-old son of Arlington Million (GI) winner Powerscourt (GB) heads a roster of 73 grass stars ages 4 and up made eligible to compete in the race with a payment of a \$100 nomination fee during the race's early nomination phase that concluded on Feb. 20. The Woodford Reserve, which is run at 1 1/8 miles on the Matt Winn Turf Course, will precede the main event on the spectacular Kentucky Derby celebration at Churchill Downs on Saturday, May 7.

The race's late nomination phase is underway and owners and trainers can nominate their horses with payment of a \$1,000 fee before that window closes on at 11:59 p.m. (all times Eastern) on Wednesday, April 13. After that, supplemental nominations can be made with a payment of \$15,000 at the Turf Classic's time of entry on Wednesday, May 5. The Woodford Reserve Turf Classic is limited to 14 starters, with preference given to winners of graded turf stakes and, after that, highest earnings in stakes races on turf in 2015-16. A total of 76 horses were nominated to the Turf Classic in 2015, a number that included two late nominees.

Finnegans Wake prevailed by a head in a dramatic three-way battle in the 2015 Woodford Reserve that included **John C. Oxley**'s runner-up **Sky Captain** and **Gary Barber**'s **Jack Milton**, who finished a head farther back in third. Stewards disqualified Sky Captain for interference with fourth-place finisher **Seek Again** and he was placed fourth in the official order of finish. The Grade I Woodford Reserve triumph was the high point of a career resurgence by Finnegans Wake, who had earlier won the Hollywood Turf Cup (GII) in late 2014 and Grade II wins in the 2015 San Gabriel and San Marcos at Santa Anita.

Other strong 2015 performances by the versatile veteran included a fourth-place run in the Knob Creek Manhattan (GI) at Belmont Park and another fourth on dirt in the Gold Cup (GI) at Santa Anita. He completed his season in mid-July with a third-place run in the Eddie Read (GII) on turf at Del Mar. Last year's exploits by Finnegans Wake lifted his career record to 7-4-4 in 32 races with earnings of \$1,545,975. His seven races in 2015 resulted in a record of 3-1-1 with earnings of \$720,600.

Other headliners on the roster of Woodford Reserve nominees include **Midwest Thoroughbreds Inc.**'s **The Pizza Man**, a career earner of \$1,908,722 and winner in 2015 of Arlington Park's Arlington Million (GI) and Stars and Stripes (GIII), Del Mar's Hollywood Turf Cup (GII) and Churchill Downs' Opening Verse; **Ken and Sarah Ramsey**'s **Big Blue Kitten**, the **Chad Brown**-trained winner in 2015 of Belmont Park's Joe Hirsch Turf Classic (GI) and Fort Marcy (GIII) and Monmouth Park's United Nations (GI); **Anthony Fanticola** and **Joseph Scardino**'s multiple Grade I winner **Obviously (IRE)**, a two-time winner of the Shoemaker Mile (GI); **Susan and Jim Hill**'s **Grand Arch**, winner of Keeneland's Shadwell Turf Mile (GI) and Saratoga's Fourstardave (GII) in a 2015 campaign that concluded with a third-place run at Keeneland behind champion **Tepin** in the Breeders' Cup Mile (GI); **Gunpowder Farm**'s **Divisidero**, a dramatic winner of Churchill Downs' American Turf (GII) in the highlight of his 3-year-old campaign for trainer **William "Buff" Bradley**; **Golden Pegasus Racing** and **Earle I. Mack**'s **Bolo**, an upset winner over Obviously in the 2016 debut for both in the Arcadia (GII) at Santa Anita; **Sareen Family Trust**'s **Om**, third to Bolo in the Arcadia and a 2015 winner of the Del Mar Derby (GII) and Santa Anita's Grade II Twilight Derby and Mathis Brothers Mile; **Terry Hamilton**'s **Heart to Heart**, winner of Gulfstream Park's Canadian Turf (GII) and Ft. Lauderdale (GII) in 2016 and unbeaten in three stakes races at Churchill Downs that include the 2014 Jefferson Cup (GIII) and Commonwealth Turf (GIII) and 2015's River City Handicap (GIII); **Al Shaqab Racing**'s **Mshawish**, the **Todd Pletcher**-trained winner of the 2016 Donn (GI) and Hal's Hope (GIII) handicaps on dirt and the 2015 Gulfstream Park Handicap (GI) and Fort Lauderdale (GII) on turf; and **Colts Neck Stables**' Belmont Derby (GI) winner **Force the Pass**.

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Also on the nomination list is **Phipps Stable's Reload**, the **Shug McGaughey**-trained winner of the recent Tampa Bay Stakes (GIII) on turf at Tampa Bay Downs. The roster also features the 2-3-4 finishers in the Tampa Bay: **Earle I. Mack, Wachtel Stable** and **Brous Stable's** runner-up **Take the Stand (ARG)**; **Melnyk Racing Stable's** third-place **Karibu Gardens** and Sky Captain, who finished fourth in his first race of 2016 for trainer **Mark Casse**.

Other accomplished Turf Classic nominees include **St. Elias Stable** and **West Point Thoroughbreds' Ring Weekend**, winner of the 2015 Kilroe Mile (GI) at Santa Anita; **Claiborne Farm** and **Adele Dilschneider's Departing**, winner of the 2015 Grade II Firecracker Handicap (now named the Wise Dan) at Churchill Downs; **Ronald Kirk, John Bates** and **Michael Riordan's Are You Kidding Me**, the **Roger Attfield**-trained winner of Woodbine's Grade II Autumn, Nijinsky and Eclipse handicaps; **Wentworth Brochu's Chocolate Ride**, the **Brad Cox**-trained winner of the Grade III Fair Grounds and Col. E.R. Bradley Handicaps at Fair Grounds; **Skychai Racing's Da Big Hoss**, winner of the 2015 Kentucky Turf Cup (GIII) at Kentucky Downs and the 2016 John B. Connally (GIII) at Sam Houston Park; **Starlight Racing's Itsaknockout**, the winner of the 2015 Fountain of Youth (GII) who ran ninth in the Kentucky Derby; **Gestut Brummerhof's Messi (GER)**, winner of the 2015 Knickerbocker Handicap (GIII) at Belmont Park; **Marjorie Post Dye, A Venneri Racing** and **Little Red Feather Racing's Midnight Storm**, winner of Del Mar's 2015 Seabiscuit Handicap (GII) and the Del Mar Derby (GII) in 2014; and **Team Valor** and **Gary Barber's Triple Threat (FR)**, winner of the 2015 Monmouth Handicap (GII).

The winner of the upcoming \$300,000 Muniz Memorial Handicap (GII) on March 26 at Fair Grounds will earn an automatic berth, which includes nomination and starting fees, for both the Turf Classic and the 2016 Arlington Million (GI) on Aug. 3 at Arlington Park. The winner of the Woodford Reserve Turf Classic also will be granted an automatic berth in the Arlington Million.

Hall of Fame trainer **Bill Mott**, Churchill Downs all-time leader in total victories and stakes wins by a trainer, leads all trainers with 10 Turf Classic nominees. Mott won the Woodford Reserve with **Paradise Creek** (1992) and **Stroll** (2004) and is tied with Wise Dan's **Charlie LoPresti, Helen Pitts-Blasi** and **Richard Lundy** for the most career victories in the race. Chad Brown, who is searching for his first Woodford Reserve victory, trains seven nominees, and **Todd Pletcher**, who won the 2006 renewal with **English Channel**, has nominated six horses to its 2016 running.

**Ken and Sarah Ramsey**, the Nicholasville, Ky. couple that is Churchill Downs' all-time leader in victories, led all Turf Classic owners with five nominees. The Ramseys are pursuing their first victory in the Turf Classic. The partnership of **Klaravich Stables** and **William Lawrence** nominated four horses to the race, while **Phipps Stable** made three horses eligible.

The Woodford Reserve Turf Classic made an auspicious debut in 1987 when reigning Eclipse Award turf champion **Manila** won its inaugural running. Manila had won a star-studded running of the Breeders' Cup Turf the previous year in which he defeated **Theatrical, Estrapade** and European hero **Dancing Brave**. Two-time Horse of the Year, two-time Eclipse Award turf champion and two time champion older horse **Wise Dan** became the Turf Classic's second two-time winner when he collected back-to-back triumphs in 2013-14. Along with Manila and Wise Dan, American turf champions that have competed in the Turf Classic include **Paradise Creek**, who won the race during his 1994 championship season, and 1992 Eclipse Award winner **Sky Classic**, runner-up to **Cudas** in that year's running. The versatile **Einstein (BRZ)**, a son of 1985 Kentucky Derby winner **Spend A Buck**, became the Turf Classic's first two-time winner when he took back-to-back runnings in 2008-09. He was a finalist for the Eclipse Award for turf champion in 2008 and outstanding older male in 2008-09. Einstein also won Churchill Downs' 2008 Clark Handicap Presented by Norton Healthcare (GI) on dirt and the 2009 Santa Anita Handicap (GI) over a synthetic Cushion Track surface.

**James T. Scatuorchio's English Channel**, winner of the 2006 Turf Classic, finished third in that year's running of the Breeders' Cup Turf (GI) at Churchill Downs. He returned to win that Breeders' Cup race the following year at Monmouth Park and was named 2007's Eclipse Award Male Turf champion.

**Priscilla Vaccarezza's Little Mike** won the Woodford Reserve in 2012, a year during which the **Dale Romans**-trained gelding also won the Arlington Million (GI) and Breeders' Cup Turf (GI). Little Mike was one of three finalists for the Eclipse Award for U.S. turf champion won by Wise Dan.

Churchill Downs, the world's most legendary racetrack, has conducted Thoroughbred racing and presented America's greatest race, the Kentucky Derby, continuously since 1875. Located in Louisville, the flagship racetrack of Churchill Downs Incorporated (NASDAQ: CHDN) offers year-round simulcast wagering at the historic track. Churchill Downs will conduct the 142<sup>nd</sup> running of the Kentucky Derby Presented by Yum! Brands on May 7, 2016. The track's 2016 Spring Meet is scheduled for April 30-July 2. Churchill Downs has hosted the Breeders' Cup World Championships eight times. Information is available at [www.ChurchillDowns.com](http://www.ChurchillDowns.com).

**2016 Woodford Reserve Turf Classic Early Nominees**

A Lot	Madefromlucky
All Included	Messi (GER)
Are You Kidding Me	Midnight Storm
Avanzare	Money Multiplier
Bal a Bali (BRZ)	Mr Maybe
Big Blue Kitten	Mshawish
Billy's Star	Obviously (IRE)
Blarp	Om
Bokeelia Island	One and Only (JPN)
Bolo	Papacoolpapacool
Can'thelpbelieving (IRE)	Quality Bird
Chocolate Ride	Red Guard
Closing Bell	Red Rifle
Da Big Hoss	Reload
Danish Dynaformer	Ring Weekend
Departing	Roman Approval
Divisidero	Royal Albert Hall (GB)
Finnegans Wake	Shining Copper
Fire Away	Sky Captain
Flamboyant (FR)	Slumber (GB)
Force the Pass	Solemn Tribute
Full Mast	Stellar Wind (JPN)
Fundamental	Taghleeb
General a Rod	Take the Stand (ARG)
Generous Kitten	Takeover Target
Go Around	The Pizza Man
Grand Arch	Tourist
Grand Tito	Tower of Texas
Granny's Kitten	Triple Threat (FR)
Heart to Heart	Twentytwentyvision
Itsaknockout	Up With the Birds
Kaigun	Valid
Karibu Gardens	Vyjack
Key to Power	Watchyourownbobber
Liberty Holiday (ARG)	Will Did It
Long On Value	Wireless Future
Lukes Alley	

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